

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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NEA-10 GAC-01 MBFR-03 SAJ-01 ACDA-19 IO-12 RSR-01

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P R 111420 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5963

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 HELSINKI 0987

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PFOR, FI, UR

SUBJECT: FINNISH- SOVIET TREATY CELEBRATIONS: THE
ATMOSPHERICS

REF: HELSINKI A-87, A-90, A-92, A-93; HELSINKI TELEGRAMS
924, 946, 949, 953, 876, 852, 832, 692

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE FINNISH- SOVIET FRIENDSHIP TREATY AND
SOVIET PRESIDENT PODGORNYY WERE THE CENTERPIECES OF SEVERAL
WEEKS OF CELEBRATIONS IN FINLAND OF THE TREATY'S 25 TH
YEAR WHICH SURPASSED IN SCOPE (AND REDUNDANCY) ANYTHING
CELEBRATED IN FINLAND IN RECENT MEMORY. THE TREATY AND
RELATIONS WITH THE EASTERN NEIGHBOR WERE EXTOLLED AT A
LENGTH AND AS MANY ELEMENTS AS POSSIBLE IN THE COUNTRY
WERE INVOLVED IN THE CEREMONIES. PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S
MAJOR SPEECH, WHICH OVERLOOKED SOME OF THE REALITIES LEADING
TO THE WINTER WAR, HAS STIRRED A CONTROVERSY WHICH WILL
CONTINUE. A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT TO THE FINNS
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(AND TO THE US) WAS AVOIDED AT THE LAST MINUTE WHEN THE STATE- OWNED TV, AFTER EDITORIAL PROTESTS AND AN INFORMAL SUGGESTION TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY BY THE EMBASSY, POSTPONED THE SHOWING ON APRIL 6 (THE ACTUAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY) OF THE SNIDE FILM ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON, " MILLHOUSE." THE CELEBRATIONS, WHILE OVERDONE, UNDERScoreD THE FINNISH DESIRE TO MAINTAIN THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. THE PODGORNy VISIT PRODUCED NO SURPRISES OR PORTENTS FOR THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FINNISH OBSERVANCE OF THE 25 TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINNISH- SOVIET TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE, HIGHLIGHTED BY THE APRIL 3-7 VISIT OF SOVIET PRESIDENT NIKOLAI PODGORNy, TREATED THE FINNISH PUBLIC TO MORE THAN IT PROBABLY WANTED OR NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VIRTUES OF FINNISH- SOVIET FRIENDSHIP. INDEED, THE CELEBRATIONS WERE MORE FULSOME THAN THE 1967 OBSERVANCE OF FINLAND' S 50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE. RADIO AND TV GROUND OUT HOURS OF PROGRAMMING, LONG SPEECHES BY NOTABLES DEALT WITH THE SUBJECT. SEMINARS, RALLIES, EXHIBITIONS, SOVIET CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS AND EXCHANGES OF DELEGATIONS WERE STAPLE FARE. THE PERIGRINATIONS OF PRESIDENT PODGORNy TO FACTORIES, RESEARCH INSTITUTES, BANGUETS, RECEPTIONS AND, OF COURSE, THE MAIN FETE AT WHICH HE AND PRESIDENT KEKKONEN MADE MAJOR ADDRESSES, AND FINALLY THE PRESENCE OF THE TWO PRESIDENTS AT THE OPENING OF A LARGE, WEEK- LONG SOVIET SPACE AND SCIENTIFIC EXHIBIT GRACED ALSO BY THE ATTENDANCE OF A COSMONAUT, WERE REPORTED IN ALL MEDIA IN DETAIL AND MOST PAPERS COMMENTED EDITORIALLy (TEXTS TRANSMITTED BY USINFO' S).

2. THE SEARCHERS FOR SUBSTANCE IN THE WHOLE PROCEEDING HAD TO CONTENT THEMSELVES WITH ANALYSIS OF WINDY SPEECHES AND THE LENGTHY " DECLARATION" ISSUED AT THE END OF THE PODGORNy VISIT ON APRIL 7 (SEE HELSINKI 924, 953; A-88 AND A-90). WHAT KEKKONEN AND PODGORNy DISCUSSED IN THEIR TETE- A- TETES REMAINS UNDISCLOSED. AN OBVIOUS, BUT NO LESS VALID, CONCLUSION IS THAT FINNISH- SOVIET RELATIONS AT PRESENT ARE SMOOTH AND THAT BOTH PARTIES ARE DOING THEIR UTMOST TO OVERLOOK SUCH UNPLEASANTNESS (1958, 1961) AS HAS OCCURRED DURING THE 25 YEAR LIFE OF THE FRIENDSHIP PACT. INDEED, PRESIDENT KEKKONEN' S PORTRAYAL, IN HIS MAJOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SPEECH, OF THE PRE- WAR RELATIONS SEEMED SO BALDLY TO

IGNORE THE REAL FACTS THAT HE IS BEING EDITORIALY
CAUTIONED NOT TO HASTILY JUDGE HISTORY AND ACCUSED
PRIVATELY IN A VARIETY OF CIRCLES OF " NEWTHINK."

3. SIDESHOW ASPECTS OF THE CELEBRATIONS WERE NUMEROUS.
PODGORNY PRESENTED KEKKONEN WITH THE NEW " PEOPLE' S
FRIENDSHIP MEDAL," PLACING KEKKONEN IN A SMALL AND SELECT(?)
GROUP WITH THE VIET CONG FOREIGN MINISTER, MADAM BINH
AND CZECH PARTY LEADER GUSTAV HUSAK. THE FINNS ISSUED A
COMMEMORATIVE STAMP. APRIL 6 WAS DECLARED A SPECIAL
FLAG DAY, AND CITIZENS WERE ENCOURAGED TO FLY THE
FINNISH COLORS AT THEIR HOMES. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY HELD RALLIES IN HELSINKI AND OTHER CITIES, AS DID
THE FINNISH- SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY. THE COMMUNIST
PARTY AND THE UN
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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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4. FINNISH TV AND RADIO PROGRAMMED 17 HOURS OF MATERIAL
ON THE SOVIET UNION AND THE TREATY, PLUS LENGTHY NEWS
COVERAGE OF THE VARIOUS EVENTS CONNECTED WITH THE
CELEBRATION AND THE PODGORNY VISIT. ON THE NIGHT OF
APRIL 6, THE ACTUAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY, THE STATE-
OWNED TV HAD SCHEDULED THE FEATURE FILM " MILLHOUSE,"
A TRAVERSTY ON THE PERSON OF THE US PRESIDENT. THE
CONSERVATIVE AND INDEPENDENT HELSINKI PRESS EDITORIALY
QUESTIONED THE PROPRIETY OF THE SHOWING, AND THE EMBASSY

INFORMALLY NOTIFIED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT SCREENING OF THE FILM WOULD NOT IMPROVE FINNISH- AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE FILM WAS CANCELLED AT THE LAST MINUTE. THE EXPLANATION GIVEN FIRST TO THE EMBASSY AND LATER TO THE PRESS BY THE TV PROGRAM DIRECTOR WAS THAT THE SHOWING OF THE FILM ON THE 6 TH MIGHT CAUSE " MISUNDERSTANDINGS." THE FILM WAS RESCHEDULED FOR APRIL 27 (SEE HELSINKI 949 AND USINFO' S 030307 Z, 050811 Z AND 061438 Z).

5. THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY WAS ALSO CELEBRATED IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOSCOW. FOREIGN MINISTER AHTI KARJALAINEN LED A DELEGATION OF FOUR CABINET MINISTERS, REPRESENTING EACH OF THE PARTIES IN THE FINNISH COALITION GOVERNMENT. WHILE IN MOSCOW KARJALAINEN HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET PREMIER KOSYGIN AND OTHERS. A RATHER MODEST ANNIVERSARY " GIFT" WAS ALSO ANNOUNCED IN MOSCOW BY KARJALAINEN -- THE OPENING OF A THIRD BORDER CROSSING POINT FOR TOURIST TRAFFIC AT NUIJAMAA (SEE HELSINKI 946).

6. THE SOVIET PRESIDENT EXTENDED AN INVITATION TO KEKKONEN TO VISIT THE USSR. NO DATE HAS BEEN SET. PRESIDENT KEKKONEN HAS MADE 23 VISITS TO THE SOVIET UNION, THREE OF THEM OFFICIAL VISITS.

7. COMMENT: THE PANEGYRICS OF THE CELEBRATIONS, WHICH IN FACT STRETCH OVER A TWO- WEEK PERIOD, HAVE TESTED THE PATIENCE OF MANY FINNS. WHILE NONE DISPUTE THE NECESSITY FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, OR EVEN THE NEED FOR APPROPRIATE OBSERVANCE OF THE TREATY ANNIVERSARY, THE REDUNDANCY OF THE FESTIVALS AS CELEBRATED IN FINLAND COULD PLEASE ONLY THE MOST DEDICATED RUSSOPHILE AND, PERHAPS, THE SOVIETS THEMSELVES. A NUMBER OF FINNS HAVE COMMENTED TO US THAT THE BEST PART OF THE CELEBRATION WILL BE ITS TERMINATION. THE CONTROVERSY STARTED BY THE PRESIDENT' S CONCEPTION OF FINNISH- SOVIET HISTORY WILL CONTINUE AND, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS MAY STIMULATE A BALANCED EXAMINATION OF THE FACTS. THE STRAIGHTENING OF THE RECORD HAS ALREADY STARTED IN SUBTLE WAYS (E. G. A PROMINENT REVIEW OF THE MEMOIRS OF FREE ESTONIA' S LAST AMBASSADOR TO FINLAND). THE IMPACT OF THE CELEBRATIONS ON THE POPULATION WITH NO PERSONAL RECOLLECTION OF THE WAR OR EVEN THE EARLY POSTWAR PERIOD IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE, BUT THE LAVISH OFFICIAL PRAISE OF SOVIET ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH HAS ENGULFED THIS IMPRESSIONABLE ELEMENT IS BOUND TO HAVE AN EFFECT.

8. THE " MILLHOUSE" EPISODE MAY BE A PLUS, FOR IT MARKS THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS THAT PUBLIC, AND AS FAR AS

WE CAN ASCERTAIN EVEN OFFICIAL PRESSURE ON THE STATE- OWNED
TV HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMBINED TO COUNTERACT PROGRAMMING
NEGATIVE TO THE US IMAGE.

9. THE TREATY CELEBRATIONS AND PODGORNÝ VISIT, OVERDONE
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AS THEY MAY HAVE BEEN, WERE PRIMARILY A MANIFESTATION OF
FINLAND' S CONTINUING DESIRE FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS
WITH THE SOVIET UNION. OTHERWISE, NOTHING OF SIGNIFICANCE
REVEALED ITSELF REGARDING THE PRESENT OR FUTURE STATE OF
THOSE RELATIONS.

10. COMMENTARY ON FINNISH- SOVIET " DECLARATION" BY SEPTTEL.
WHITE

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